Met Office

February 2001

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1961-1990.

UK overview

Wet weather returned to eastern parts of England at the start. As high pressure began to dominate it became drier with sunshine by day and frost at night. Turned cold towards the end with quite significant snowfalls in Scotland and northern England.

In Scotland, heavy snow at the start and end of the month brought power cuts and disrupted road, rail and air transport.

England and Wales diary of highlights

Sunny and wet overall, very wet in south-east England and East Anglia. Wet and unsettled first fortnight, then dry with fog and frost at night. Colder last week with some snow later in the north.

1st to 8th Complex low pressure was centred over the UK during this period, with bands of rain and showers affecting the region, sometimes heavy and accompanied by thunder. After a cold start with a little snow in the north it became mostly mild or very mild, especially in the south. A gust of 73 kn was recorded at Mumbles (south Wales) on the 6th, thundery rain broke out over southern counties of England on the 7th.

9th to 12th A ridge of high pressure on the 9th gave way to more wind and rain on the 10th and 11th, north-west areas were particularly wet. A small active depression over south-east England on the 12th gave copious amounts of rain in many places before migrating to the extreme south-east by evening.

13th to 20th High pressure dominated allowing much dry weather with frost and fog at night, and sunny periods by day, although the fog was slow to clear in places. Temperatures stayed chilly in areas where fog lingered. South-east England and East Anglia were more cloudy at times.

21st to 25th With the anticyclone receded westwards and low pressure over Scandinavia north-westerly winds brought increasingly colder air southwards from the Arctic. Though cloudy at first it became generally sunny later but with some severe frosts at night inland. Counties bordering the North Sea had wintry showers from time to time leaving a dusting of snow in places. Sennybridge in Powys recorded minus 8.8 °C on the morning of the 25th.

26th to 28th A complex low off southwest Scotland moved south to Brittany, its associated fronts giving substantial falls of snow in northern England and north Wales, especially over high ground. Boltshope Park (Durham) had 33 cm of snow on the morning of the 28th. Further south there were outbreaks of rain sleet and snow.

Scotland diary of highlights

Snow, sun and then more snow.

The weather of February divided neatly into 3 well-defined periods, with major snowfalls at the beginning and end of the month being separated by a spell of relatively mild, dry and sunny weather. It is noteworthy that all 3 winter months have contained periods of dry and sunny conditions.

February began with an intense anticyclone over Finland directing a very cold and strong easterly airstream towards the Northern Isles, and this pushed slowly across the whole of Scotland. On the 4th, the temperature at Lerwick fell to -7.3 °C, equalling the February extreme there. The next day an automatic station at Baltasound recorded a temperature of -11.9 °C, and this is possibly the lowest temperature ever recorded on Shetland. Heavy snow accompanied the cold surge as it came up against milder air to the south, and much of northern and eastern Scotland received substantial falls. Power cuts and transport disruption followed, with two trains becoming trapped in the snow.

Milder Atlantic air invaded the country on the 10th, and after a couple of unsettled days, an anticyclone developed over England to give several days of quiet weather. There was plenty of sunshine with pleasant daytime temperatures, although there was still slight frost on some nights.

The anticyclone receded to the south and west on the 20th, allowing a westerly airflow to cover Scotland. During the next few days pressure continued to fall and winds veered into the north, allowing snow showers to affect the north of Scotland. A depression developed near Iceland and moved slowly south then east, and this brought a major snowstorm to central and southeastern parts of Scotland on the 26th/27th. The snow was accompanied by strong winds, and the drifting meant that road, rail and air transport was severely disrupted.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

This was a sunny February month.

A large number of very sunny days recorded between the 7th and 24th. However, with skies often relatively free of cloud, this led to a high frequency of overnight frosts. The weather was often dry, sunny and quite pleasant, with day-time temperatures overall being almost 1 °C above normal for the month. However, night-time minimum temperatures were around half a degree below normal. The periods 10th to 14th and 19th to 22nd were mildest overall, although the weather turned very wintry during the last few days of the month, with significant snowfalls recorded across the eastern half of the country overnight on the 26th/27th.

1st to 6th Generally unsettled with spells of rain or showers and quite dull.

7th to 9th Dry,cold, very sunny but with widespread overnight frosts.

10th to 11th Much milder with some persistent rain on the 10th. Dull.

12th to 19th Dry, sunny and pleasantly spring-like. Overnight frosts.

20th to 22nd Largely dry until the 22nd, but mostly cloudy or overcast.

23rd to 24th Colder again with overnight sharp frosts, but quite sunny. Occasional wintry showers.

25th to 28th Cold, with wintry showers on the 25th and 26th. Persistent snow overnight on 26th/27th. Dry, cold and sunny on 28th.

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